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**The idea-constructing international order of East Asia:  
Reflecting on the short-term phenomenon observation-centered  
IRs study and normative approach as alternative on the Cross-  
Straits relations and Inter-Korean relations**

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## **The idea-constructing international order of East Asia:**

Reflecting on the short-term phenomenon observation-centered IRs study and normative approach as alternative on the Cross-Straits relations and Inter-Korean relations

Sung-lim Park, Anson<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Introduction: idea as ultimate cause in IR**

The goal of this studying is to identify the substantial impact of idea in the International Relations (IR) that has played an ultimate role to construct international order and each state's foreign policy. Among many types of invisible and vague idea, Political thought plays a leading role to bring conflicts among countries and transform the power struggle into peace and coexistence. Its substantial impact to construct international order and each states' policy response is identified through tracing open debate and discussion on foreign policy in the media and publication. Behind many positions and cures in foreign policy discourse, political thought offers the foundational view to understanding real world and response alternative. Therefore, searching for the impact of political thought in IR over time is the new way of understanding on IR, gives new insight into short-term phenomenon centered past trend in IR.

This approach is identified in the re-interpretation on the Cross-Straits Relations and Inter-Korean Relations that is the historical legacy of the Cold War, has driven regional tension in East Asia. Based on the confrontational relations of the Cold War, the identity and nuclear crisis since the 1990s have worsened the bilateral relations, and the pursuit of power supremacy between U.S and China begins to make these worsening relations into more complicating.

Looking through the historical evolution since the 20th century in East Asia, the Taiwan Straits and Korean Peninsula are the most places of collision among maritime power and continental power such as the Japan, U.S, Soviet Union, and today's China. For four countries

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(Two Koreas and Taiwan, China), Cross-Straits relations and the Inter-Korean Relations since the late-1940s are the main themes to decide the state's survival and boosting prosperity that is identified in their foreign policy mainly. The collision not only drives the countries into crisis, but their rapprochement changed the countries and region into a more peaceful situation. In the past study, studying the short-term analysis in the Structural approach to emphasize Great power's role or globalized economy and bilateral analysis between Taiwan and China, or two Koreas were the most popular method. Although these approaches achieved to suggest Great Power's substantial role to construct the international order or globalized economy, or two countries' responses, the ideal perspective to decide individuals' choice who are in government, institute, a scholar has not been answered. However, the most foreign policy-making process is completed by many individual actors' thinking and idea, showing the power of idea in foreign policy making and international relations. It is identified through analyzing policy discourse in the newspaper and magazines' comments or books. These many debates on the Cross-Straits Relations and Inter-Korean Relations can be understood on the situational outcome, but its intellectual foundation

The purpose of this paper is to offer the idea-centered approach to International Relations, giving the reflection on the structural-led analysis and bilateral relations-centered analysis to the regional politics of East Asia and suggests discovering ideal origin through interpretation on regional themes is more persuasive approach. Behind the Section 1 as the introduction, reviewing to the past study of East Asia international politics in Section 2 demonstrates why the previous approach fails to highlight the cause of worsening conflicts among states in the region, because of theoretical limits. To fulfill the limits, in section 3, the revival of studying idea in IR will be argued. Tracing the ideal origin in the relations of states naturally leads each country's debate on the foreign relations and policies, showing each country's proactive role in constructing international order and its maintenance. Based on the discovery between idea and reality in IR, I suggest the three-step analysis as alternative method to highlight the international order of East Asia in section 4, 1) Historical observation on the Cross-Straits relations and Inter-Korean relations in the era of Cold War and Post-Cold War, 2) tracing policy discourse in two relations, and 3) lastly highlighting the substantial impact of political thought behind policy and policy discourse. It demonstrates why the international relations in the region has been worsening because of the idea matters behinds real world. Lastly, in section 5, the sum-up of this paper is to give a new insight to focus the ideal perspective in IR that is the ultimate cause

of changing reality and outcome.

## **2. Why past approach fails to explain East Asia?**

Martin Wright, in his work “Why there is non-western international theory?”, argues the power-led principle of state to state relations unchanged, and discovering the international theory beyond the western countries is meaningless (Wright, 1968). The worsening international circumstance of East Asian in the Post-Cold War demonstrates the Great power-led international order and the theories fails to give explanations. If the Great power could dominate the all relations and phenomenon, why the South Korea as the member of U.S-led alliance like Japan, why the Seoul is more cooperated with China to the debate of Japanese ruling against Japan? Does China’s rising as great power in terms of military capability and sharp economic rising dominate the Cross-Straits relation? If Taiwan’s continuing resistance against China’s attempt to unite with it could be possible in the U.S-dominating regional order, did Taiwan fully follow the order from the U.S? Like many questions and historical experiences, the power-led international theory could give little explanations. In the relations of state to state, the Great power’s military and economic power is one of robust power to change the real world that cannot be debated. However, the historical experience of East Asia demonstrates the conventional power-based past theory only give the partial explanations.

For the turbulent international relations of East Asia, three characters is vividly found in the past study, 1) the Great Power’s predominant military power and Globalized economy-led structural analysis, 2) Bilateral relations-led study, 3) each country’s policy response in the changing international relations. To begin with, in the era of Cold War and Post-Cold War since the 1990s, the role of U.S’ as the hegemon to construct the regional order and committing of maintaining stability in the region is so prominent. The bilateral defense alliance between the U.S and many allies like Japan, Taiwan and South Korea (Katzenstein, 2005) was prominently contrary with communist countries weaken relations and many debates for ideology and conflicts, such as China-Soviet Union’s territorial dispute and ideological debate, the cooling relations of China-North Korea in the era of Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976.

Along with the end of Cold War in the 1990s, the alliance against the opposed ideology could not be the central theme that replaced with the debate of the market opening, trade, currency rate between the U.S and allies of East Asia. However, although the international order of U.S-Soviet Union has changed into the U.S-led single order with the fall of Soviet Union in 1991, the role of U.S as proactive mediator was unchanged that the involving in the 1994-1995 Taiwan Straits Crisis, the North Korea's developing nuclear weapon demonstrated the continuing involvement and regional order. By the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, the rise of China and assertive footstep in the realm of Japan-China territorial dispute, South China Sea, North Korea raises the prospect of China's challenge against the U.S-led regional order (Chung , 2009 , Friedberg , 2011).

Rational-choice based study of Cross-Strait relations and Inter-Korean relations are also indebted from structural analysis of East Asia regional politics secondly. In Cross-Strait relations, Triangle model of U.S-China-Taiwan demonstrates the Great Power's dominant role and weak power's limited choice Lowell Dittmer's study of the Washington-Beijing-Taiwan trilateral relations emphasizes the Taipei's limited choice in the Great Power-driven tricky puzzle (Dittmer, 2005). The Great Power's dominant role is also emphasized in the Wu Yushan's study (Wu, 2011 , 46-50), the historical review of the external relations of Baltic Sea countries and Russia (Soviet Union) in the modern period identified the militarily weak country's policy choice is limited between balancing or bandwagoning. In the rise of China and the pursuit of supremacy between the U.S and China, allying with one Great Power can be considered a possible alternative in Taiwan's foreign policy and Cross-Strait relation. Kim Chae-Han's study gives the question of solving confrontational situation between two Korea and the U.S in the Post-Cold War in the 1990s. In his studying, the cause of instability and confrontation among three countries is the confrontational relations of U.S-North Korea and South and North Korea. The practical approach is to attempt to bring change by making the diplomatic tie of the U.S-North Korea and two Korea's effort to reduce military spending at the same time (Kim Chae-han, 1990).

Besides the U.S-led regional order and the proactive role as the hegemonic power in East Asia, the Globalization-led approach emphasizes how the global market since the 1990s brought the substantial impact to the traditional state and the governance, in

cluding foreign relations. Leng Tse-kang argues, in the wave of globalization since 1990s, the traditional role and nature of state in domestic and foreign relations began to be requested its change and the domestic firm's increasing investment and production in Mainland China should be understood as the adaptive response in the globalized economy (Leng Tse-Kang, 2009, 144-158). In the relations of two Korea, the market and firms' influence cannot be counted like the Taiwan-China relations, because of different economic development model between two Koreas. The consolidated leadership of the political leader and bureaucrats and its proactive role in economic planning, resource distribution, and technical support is the main character of Developmental State in the case of Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea while North Korea adopted to Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) model. Because of the economic development model and North Korea's extremely low export dependency, the impact of global economy and firm's substantial role is hardly found in the South-North Korea relations.

On the contrary with a structural approach, the bilateral analysis of the Cross-Strait relations and Inter-Korean relation mainly focuses on the domestic political perspective.

The national separation since 1945 by the international pressure and different ideology were identified in the case of West and East Germany, South, and North Korea, North, and South Vietnam (Chang Wu-Ueh, 2009, 64-81). Although the separation between South and North Korea is increasing the difference in politics, economy and social and cultural realm, the mutual perception to each other as one nation is the leading cause to maintain their bilateral relations. For the Cross-Strait relations, it is no longer to define the Cross-Strait relation as the divided nation, because of the emergence of Taiwanese identity since the 1990s.

### **3. Discovering the origin of war and peace in idea**

#### **(1) The limit of phenomenon analysis in IR**

The U.S-inclined approach has been the most prominent trend in the study to the East Asia International politics. In this region, since the end of World War II, the dominant role of U.S in

the constructing regional order cannot be neglected readily. The U.S military's proactive involvement in the Chinese Civil War (1946-1949), Korean War (1950-1953), and the Vietnam War in the late-1950-1970s demonstrate the presence of the U.S and the substantial impact to the region. It is explained in the Waltz' international structure theory, emphasizing the Great Power's role to construct the hierarchical international order, means the Great Power and power is the only cause in explaining the IR.

The U.S' predominant role as hegemon in the East Asia international order and political landscape, however, could be implemented with allying with regional countries that only offers the partial explanation. And, the many cases in East Asia demonstrates, in the explaining the IR, the Great Power and power cannot offer the cause to the various changes. In the Cross-Straits Relations, by the change of political landscape since 2006, Chen Shui-bian had offered the state to state relations in the Cross-Straits relations. For the U.S, the war cloud in the Taiwan Straits was not helpful to the regional stability and the U.S. The war in Afghanistan and Iraq was the most strategic burden for Washington, couldn't arrange another force into the Straits. Chen's provocative policy to the Cross-Straits relations derived from his domestic political situation, gathering more support from Pro-independence camp, despite worsening relations with China. In the Inter-Korean relations, Kim Young-sam, the South Korean President in 1993-1998, would not want to the U.S-North Korea bilateral normalization (Sigal, 1998). Although, improving bilateral relations among the two countries was helpful for the regional stability, particularly for the Korean Peninsula. However, for Kim Young-sam's vague view on the Inter-Korean relations, the South Korean government left in the passive position.

Secondly, considering to the nature of state as aggregate of many individuals is neglected. The one of old assumption in IR is the state is the only actor in constructing international order and its driving. However, whether any department in government is the aggregate of many individuals and understanding its individualistic perspective should be considered. In the past study, mainly based on the Neo-Realism and Neo-Liberalism IR theory, the state is assumed as the only actor and for understanding it, analyzing its official opinion through analyzing the official document and open debate is the favorite way as analyzing method. Therefore, in the past study, the most theoretical limits are 1) the Power-centered understanding to the IR, 2) neglecting the nature of state in individual perspective.

## **(2) How to understand the reality and idea together?**

It is clear that for understanding to the IR, the power-centered politics lacks of understanding of nature of state as complicated policy among many individuals. Also, regarding to the turbulent historical evolution of East Asia from forced modernization and colonization in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and violent conflicts in the Cold War, the Great Power-centered theories fails to give enough explanation to many cases in the era of Cold War and even Post-Cold War. If the past IR scholarship is defined to the study of phenomenon observation, the new approach should fill the gap of past study that means to include the non-phenomenon perspective in advance. For solving the problem, the study of political thought and the theorization can be considered. However, if we think of widen gap between the phenomenon observation-centered analysis in IR and the studying to the political thought and theory, understanding both scholarship together

In the observation between domestic and international level, tracing policy discourse is the alternative approach to overcome the phenomenal observation-led past study. Waltz argues the Great-power as the polar of international politics dominates the constructing order among states that is the unchanging truth, and by the maintained principle, observing the historical evolution of international politics or study the philosophical origin is not helpful. In the relations of each country, each decision by states is seen the response to the external change.

In the early history of Cross-Straits relations since 1949, both countries made efforts to be the legitimate successor in Chinese history, emphasizing the country (Republic of China or People's Republic of China) is the only legitimate country, called the opposed country as "Illegitimate group." The discourse to the Han Thief Incompatibility was the mainstream in the Cross-Straits Relations policy of Taiwan against China. The story of Gou-Jian to recover his lost territory and be the hegemon was the part of this discourse, played a leading role to legitimize the Nationalist government's plan to recover the mainland territory in 1950s-1960s (Cohen, 2010) The similar trend is identified in the same period of Inter-Korean relations. Lee Seung-man called North Korea as "the North," "Communist, openly demonstrating not to recognize the opposite party that the change occurred the early-1970s when Nixon visited in China to make official ties. Based on these discourses of two relations in the Taiwan Straits and the Korean Peninsula, the hostile policy was born, showing how idea transformed into the visualized foreign policy in the real world.



## **4. Three-levels analysis as the alternatives**

### **(1) The theoretical framework of three-level analysis**

In the IR study, the mainstream was to analyze the state's decision, observing policies is the favored method to understand each country's response in the changing real world. Also, if we considered the state as the aggregate of many individual and their group, the ideal perspective as the most character of a human being should be considered. In this paper, therefore, the three-levels analysis is the way of understanding the dual perspective of IR between real-world observation and the ideal perspective.

It consists of three-level (Observing historical evolution, Trace the policy discourse, and suggesting the philosophical origin from the policy discourse), making an effort to search for the cause on the conflicts and wars among countries. Why is the ideal perspective so significant? Because the leading actor of state and the relations of the state is, of course, a human being, who pursues various types of desires from securing his or her property to unseen national glory. Understanding the human being's attempt to achieve the intellectual goal. Policy discourse is the part of the policy-making process that the opinions on the newspaper, current issue magazine is the visualized results from many professionals to the particular issue. It is also observed by many of departments in government and policy document and behaviors reflects various observation of the changes in the real world, including its policy discourse. After observing the policy discourse in the historical turbulence, digging the philosophical origin as the ultimate cause of change is the last work in the three-level analysis.

In IR study, the phenomenon is assumed as the complete outcome and the reason together. However, regarding the nature of human being, idea are the ultimate cause to bring the change to the particular changes in the real world. Tracing the philosophical origin to the result demonstrates how the result is constructed and what the idea bring the result. Therefore, after digging the philosophical origin in the policy discourse is the final work in the three-level analysis.

## **(2) Three-levels analysis in the Cross-Straits relations and Inter-Korean relations**

It is clear that the Cross-Straits relations and Inter-Korean relations are the most hostile relations and sensitive issue in East Asia regional order and understanding the two relations in the regional view gives insight to the international politics of East Asia from the Great-Power centered view to the interactive sight between Great power and regional countries. Regarding the war and peace as the core theme of IR, the Taiwan Straits and the Korean Peninsula is the most significant place in the region. For four countries (Two Koreas and Taiwan, China), these two relations, de facto, has to lead the direction of foreign policy and even is the domestic political issue.

Therefore, to understand the international relations of the Taiwan Straits and the Korean Peninsula, understanding the historical change of two relations is in the first step. Unlike the bilateral relations analysis to the relations, it focuses on the interaction between two relations and the regional order, mainly to occur the structural change in the region. Four countries, in these relations, has struggled to dominate the hegemony, challenging to the hegemon country like the U.S are also frequently found. In the era of the Cold War since 1949-1992 and the Post-Cold War from 1992 until today, two relations were the primary cause to decide the regional order and stability. Under the growing threats and distrust in the two of bilateral relations, the confrontational relations since the Cold War played a foundational role in the two relations. Although the economic exchange has grown since the mid-1980s in the Taiwan Straits, China's non-recognition to Taiwan as the independent state as the legacy of Cold War and the domestic political issue has driven the relations into hostile. For the Inter-Korean relations, the sudden rapprochement and confrontation have revived during seventy years that in the Post-Cold War, the growing gap between conservative party and progressive party on the Inter-Korean relations decides the bilateral relations with the North Korea to the collision (By Conservative) or cooperation (By Progressive). In the ruling period of Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003), Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008), the governing party's proactive effort to expand the economic and cultural cooperation through official and private channel brought little tension in the peninsula. However, in the conservative government period, the tension and distrust revived in the South-North Korea relations, and North Korea made efforts to maximize the nuclear power, influencing the regional stability in East Asia.

In the turbulent historical evolution, many of policy discourses not only reflect various individuals and groups' view to the particular issue, such as allowing the Taiwanese firms' investment to China, or banning the Korean businesses' economic exchange with the North Korea that can be identified in the comments of newspaper, current issue magazine. For instance, the Quarterly Changni since 1966 has dealt with the Inter-Korean relations, and the editorial and papers to the issue vividly demonstrate how the South Korean thought of the issue and bilateral relations with North Korea. Among many discourses and debates, searching for the philosophical origin is the final work to show the cause in the changing world. Nationalism is the one of main intellectual foundation to constructing two relations. For Chinese perspective, the 1992 Consensus is believed the red line in the bilateral relations with Taiwan, sharing one Chinese identity in the separated relations played a foundational role in leading the relations. Behind the discourses in the historical change, Nationalism is the leading cause and intellectual foundation to drive two relations from rapprochement to sudden confrontation. In two Koreans side, the political separation since 1948 and the Korean War is the primary cause of two Koreas, seeing the cause of split as external involvement from the U.S or the Soviet Union, emphasizes the national identity and the need of bilateral cooperation. However, like Chinese experience, Nationalism emphasizes the one-sided view, giving little interests to the opposite side and their different view.

## **5. Conclusion and prospects**

East Asia is seen as the most prosperous region, and its wild regional landscape has been the emerging theme in IR. Along with the rise of China and its aggressive steps in the South China Sea, East China Sea, and North Korea Nuclear Crisis, Taiwan not only pays attention from government, think tank, but it also has been significant in theorizing IR theory. The Great-power-led approach in the Past study to East Asia has focused on the U.S' impact on the region, neglecting the regional country's substantial role. It derives from the short-term phenomenon analysis that is based on the Great-Power-led international order is unchanged, neglecting the historical analysis and studying on the nature of the state in philosophical perspective and swept away in the s

cientific revolution since the 1960s.

However, regarding the complicated nature of the state in the domestic level, when we trace the cause of state's choice in the international level not only needs the phenomenon observation but discovering its ideal origin should be implemented together. In this theoretical foundation, three levels-analysis from historical observation to the tracing the philosophical origin in the policy result and the discourse is the alternative way to overcome the phenomenon-centered analysis. The case study of Cross-Straits relations and Inter-Korean relations as the most sensitive issue in the war and peace of East Asia, and either domestic political theme and the international issue needs the complicated approach to identify the ultimate cause to the worsening international circumstance. Moreover, the three-steps analysis is the efficient way of understanding the complex theme and East Asia.

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